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PP RUEHBW RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHPG #0312 1431256
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 221256Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0331
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHPS/AMEMBASSY PRISTINA 0041
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0157
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0251
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1947

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 000312

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

EUR/SCE FOR SSHIRATORI AND CHOH, EUR/NCE FOR ALEX TRATENSEK

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UNMIK](#) [UN](#) [YI](#) [KV](#) [EZ](#) [EUN](#)
SUBJECT: CZECH REPUBLIC RECOGNIZES KOSOVO

REF: A. STATE 34331
[1](#)B. CARNIE-GARBER E-MAIL DATED 5.21.08

Classified By: Pol-Econ Counselor Michael Dodman for reasons 1.4 b+d

[1](#)1. (U) The Czech government, meeting in a cabinet session on May 21, officially recognized Kosovo. The Czech MFA released the following statement on May 21:

The Czech Republic has recognized independence of Kosovo

Following the proposal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Government expressed on May 21, 2008 its agreement with the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Republic of Kosovo, by which the Czech Republic recognized the Republic of Kosovo as an independent state.

The policy of the Czech Republic proceeds from the conviction that the recognition of independence of Kosovo will provide for the strengthening of the overall stability in the region and for a realistic way out of the untenable situation and will direct the efforts of the countries of the Western Balkans on to the challenges arising from their future membership in the European and Euroatlantic institutions.

The recognition of Kosovo and the establishment of diplomatic relations will be part of the reply of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the letter from the President and the Prime Minister of Kosovo. By recognizing Kosovo and establishing diplomatic relations, the Czech Republic will confirm its active policy in the region of Western Balkans and its work for its stabilization and democratic development in the long run.

The Czech Republic will transform its UNMIK Liaison Office in Pristina into the Embassy of the Czech Republic in the Republic of Kosovo.
End of statement.

[1](#)2. (SBU) MFA staff told us on the afternoon of May 21 that the government had already notified the Serb government of their decision. It is expected that Jana Hrebickova, head of the Czech Liaison office in Pristina since August 2007, will be named Ambassador.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: The Czech decision comes much later than the MFA and other officials had expected. The MFA believed that the Czechs would follow the first wave of large EU members in recognizing. However, the issue proved much more politically sensitive than expected. Following Kosovo's declaration of independence a majority of government ministers declared themselves opposed to recognition, led by the Christian Democrats but including many members of PM Topolánek's party. This, combined with the prolonged absence of FM

Schwarzenberg following a medical procedure and a confluence of other differences between Topolanek's ODS and the Christian Democrats, led the government to put off the cabinet vote to recognize Kosovo until after the Serb elections. The outlines of the internal government compromise that permitted the recognition vote to go forward this week are not yet known. All Christian Democrats and one member of ODS voted against recognition. However, Christian Democratic leaders were relatively restrained in their comments following the vote.

14. (C) Criticism from the opposition (where pro-Serb sentiment runs strong) has been much more vocal, and there is an outside chance there will be more formal criticism from parliament. However, we do not expect that the hesitation in going forward with recognition will have any lasting impact on Czech engagement in the region. The Czechs kept a low profile in the International Steering Group while the recognition decision was pending, but are ready to fully engage. The 500 Czech peacekeepers in Kosovo will remain in place. Czech business, led by the large Czech electric utility company CEZ, is also interested in opportunities in Kosovo; their enthusiasm may have played a significant part in the government decision to go ahead with recognition. End comment.
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